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## Transforming Lives and Making History: Gabriel's World Championship Journey

In his years serving at Casa Hogar Adonai, Gabriel Navarro has been a Mentor with Mentor a Mentor since **2016**, faithfully teaching Capoeira twice a week to the children of the orphanage in Chihuahua, Mexico. During this time, he has inspired, supported, taught, and mentored more than **430 orphaned children**. His influence goes far beyond the Capoeira roda (circle) — he has been a steady presence, a role model, and a source of joy, discipline, and confidence for every child who has passed through the program.

Gabriel is not only a remarkable instructor and mentor; he is also an exceptional Capoeirista. This year, he had the opportunity to travel to Brazil to train and compete in the World Capoeira Championships in Rio de Janeiro. Thanks to the generous support of our donors, Mentor a Mentor was able to sponsor Gabriel and help cover his travel expenses. At the championships, he achieved an extraordinary milestone: **2nd place in the world**.

Shortly after returning to Mexico, our team — Javier, Rebecca, and Cara — sat down with him to hear firsthand about this transformative experience.

Here are the highlights of that conversation, shared in Gabriel's own words.



Javier, Rebecca, and Cara talk with Gabriel about his training and competition in Brazil.

### **Cara: Gabriel, tell us about your overall experience in Brazil?**

**Gabriel:** “I went with the mindset of just learning. My brother told me that in Brazil they are very protective of their culture and of Capoeira. He told me, ‘No matter how good you are, try to step aside... let them take the initiative and learn as much as you can.’

At first, during rodas and trainings, I would move to the side and wait. Even if someone wasn’t very advanced, I let them go first. But little by little, they started inviting me in — ‘Go ahead, jump in.’

Most of them live 100% for Capoeira. They train, teach, go to the gym, train again, teach more... all day they’re running around with classes and social projects. It’s another world — another way of seeing Capoeira.”

### **Rebecca: What was competition week like? What stands out most to you?**

**Gabriel:** “It was a full week. The first two days were only training, and on Wednesday the competition started — very late at night. Normally I get nervous, but in the first round I wasn’t nervous at all. People say the first round is easy to pass if you’re trained.

Each round has three games:

- **Benguela** — more on the ground
- **Siriúna** — more acrobatic
- **São Bento** — more martial

After my first round, I sat down and started watching my teammates — people from Brazil I had been training with for months. I suddenly felt overwhelmed with emotion and started crying. It hit me that I was really there competing. A dream that was now a reality. The second round I don’t remember much, especially in the acrobatic game. I felt like I didn’t do anything, even though the video showed I did.

In the semifinals I played with two Brazilians and an Angolan — very strong. I remember him especially because after the match he hugged me and said in Spanish, ‘I’m very happy for you. You deserve it.’

When they announced the finalists, I was sitting there in a regular Capoeira shirt thinking, 'If I don't pass, it's okay.' Then they said my name, and I had to change quickly and start warming up."

**Javier: What were some of the most meaningful moments for you?**

**Gabriel:** "When they called my name for the final — that's one of the memories I like most. I thought, 'I made it to the final. I don't care if I end up fourth, third, second, or first. My first world championship and I already made the final.

When they announced third place — Spoleto — I thought, 'Wow... I'm either first or second. The one who got first place is the star of the moment — Veloz. They told me he has competed more than 20 times and has never lost.

So reaching second place in the final with him there — it felt like first place to me. He had way more experience than I did."

**Javier: What did you learn from the finals? What was your strategy?**

**Gabriel:** "They always tell me I need to attack more and be tougher, because I'm always too nice. Sometimes I forgive too much.

In every round I tried some kind of takedown. With the Angolan I couldn't — I tried twice. In the final, the guy from Israel tried to throw me, but I reversed it and threw him. A few seconds later I did a jumping kick, and he threw me. That's how it is — if you don't try things, nothing happens.

In Siriúna, I was paired with Veloz because we're both acrobatic. They put us there to make sure there would be a good acrobatic show."



[Click here to see Gabriel in action at the World Championships in Brazil!](#)

**Rebecca: How did the children at Casa Hogar Adonai react when you returned to Mexico?**

**Gabriel:** "When I got back to Casa Hogar Adonai, the kids ran up to me the moment I walked in. They hugged me, grabbed my arms, surrounded me, and started talking all at once — asking questions, wanting to know everything.

One moment that really stayed with me was when one of the boys looked at me very seriously and asked:

**“¿Por qué no ganaste el primer lugar?”**

("Why didn't you win first place?")

I laughed and told him,

**“Pues gané segundo, es algo muy bueno.”**

("Well, I got second place — that's really good!")

But he just looked at me and insisted,

**“Pero... ¿por qué no primero?”**

("But... why not first?")

It made me smile because it showed how much they believe in me."

### **Cara: What message would you like to share with the children and youth of Casa Hogar Adonai after this experience?**

**Gabriel:** "I want to share what I learned in Brazil — the energy, the discipline, and the mindset. Now that the kids have seen my videos, they have more spark and more energy in their training. Capoeira is not only about training; it's about sharing, meeting people, building community, and forming friendships.

I want to tell them to keep training hard. Believe in yourselves and trust the process. You can achieve anything you want. Don't put obstacles in your own way — you can reach your dreams and accomplish what you set your mind to."

### **Closing Thoughts**

We are incredibly proud to have Gabriel as an instructor within Mentor a Mentor. His journey reflects years of hard work, sacrifice, and perseverance. Gabriel's dedication and passion continue to inspire not only our team, but also the children and youth he mentors at Casa Hogar Adonai — and everyone who follows his story.

Thank you for our partners who pray for us and give generously to financially support Mentor a Mentor. Your donations go to our Mentors like Gabriel who inspire and guide vulnerable youth.

**Would you consider sponsoring Gabriel \$50 per month starting Giving Tuesday, December 2, 2025 to help sustain the work he is doing at Orphanage Casa Hogar Adonai?** Or if you prefer, we are asking for one-time donations to support Gabriel's Capoeira coaching two times a week at the Orphanage and to be able to support special events like belt promotions with the youth of Casa Hogar Adonai.

Giving Tuesday is just one week away! Click the button below to donate today or on Giving Tuesday.

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